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Regional confidence-building measures: activities of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

During the period under review, the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa held two meetings. The thirty-third and thirty-fourth ministerial meetings were held, respectively, in Bangui from 5 to 9 December 2011 and in Bujumbura from 14 to 18 May 2012. They were organized by the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA), which assumed the secretariat functions of the Committee following the decision of the Secretary-General to transfer that responsibility from the Office for Disarmament Affairs to the Department of Political Affairs.

The ministerial meetings allow the States members of the Committee to develop a collective response to emerging threats to peace and security in Central Africa. In that regard, at its thirty-third ministerial meeting, the Committee adopted a declaration on a road map for counter-terrorism and non-proliferation of arms in Central Africa. It also continued to consider emerging issues, notably the illegal exploitation of natural resources, the impact of climate change on peace and security in Central Africa and the promotion of International Widows' Day as a vehicle for creating awareness of the plight of widows and their children.

The devastating explosions at an ammunition depot in Brazzaville on 4 March 2012 highlighted the need for adequate stockpile management, as promoted by the Central African Convention for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons, Their Ammunition and All Parts and Components That Can Be Used for Their Manufacture, Repair and Assembly, known as the Kinshasa Convention. The States

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members of the Committee agreed to ratify the Convention ahead of the twentieth anniversary of the Committee, to be celebrated in December 2012 in Brazzaville. To enter into force, the Convention requires the deposit of six instruments of ratification, acceptance, approval or accession.

The Committee also held discussions on items currently on the agenda of the Security Council. In that regard, it remained seized of the issue of piracy and maritime insecurity, which has featured on its programme of work since 2008. The Committee reviewed the status of implementation of national and subregional measures to tackle piracy and armed robbery at sea in the Gulf of Guinea and welcomed the support provided by UNOCA to the Economic Community of Central African States and the Gulf of Guinea Commission in the organization of a regional summit. Under its item on efforts to combat armed groups in Central Africa, the Committee discussed the elements contained in the regional strategy to tackle the threat and impact of the Lord's Resistance Army that was submitted to the Security Council on 29 June 2012, in addition to the Committee's contribution to its implementation.

Lastly, the Committee developed strategic partnerships with organizations carrying out activities relevant to its work. In that regard, representatives of the subregional offices for Central Africa of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and the Economic Commission for Africa participated in meetings of the Committee for the first time. The Committee also strengthened existing relationships with technical partners that could help to advance its agenda, including the secretariat of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, the Subregional Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Central Africa and the Regional Centre on Small Arms and Light Weapons in the Great Lakes Region, the Horn of Africa and Bordering States.

I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 66/55, entitled "Regional confidence-building measures: activities of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa", the General Assembly reaffirmed its support for efforts aimed at promoting confidence-building measures at the regional and subregional levels in order to ease tensions and conflicts in Central Africa and to further sustainable peace, stability and development in the subregion.

2. The General Assembly also expressed its satisfaction to the Secretary-General for his support for the effective inauguration of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) in Libreville, and strongly encouraged the States members of the Committee to support the work of the Office. It also requested the Secretary-General to continue to provide the assistance needed by the Committee to ensure the success of its regular biannual meetings, and called upon him to submit to the Assembly at its sixty-seventh session a report on the implementation of the resolution.

3. The present report is submitted in response to the latter request and covers the activities carried out by the Committee from July 2011 to June 2012.

II. Activities of the Committee

4. The Committee's thirty-third and thirty-fourth ministerial meetings, held in Bangui from 5 to 9 December 2011 and Bujumbura from 14 to 18 May 2012, respectively, were attended by the 11 States members of the Committee: Angola, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Rwanda and Sao Tome and Principe.

5. The following entities also participated in the ministerial meetings as observers: African Union; International Conference on the Great Lakes Region; Regional Centre on Small Arms and Light Weapons in the Great Lakes Region, the Horn of Africa and Bordering States; secretariat of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS); Subregional Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Central Africa; Subregional Office for Central Africa of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa; Subregional Office for Central Africa of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women); United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in the Central African Republic; United Nations Office in Burundi; and United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa.

6. The main issues discussed at both ministerial meetings are set out below.

A. Establishment of a road map for counter-terrorism and non-proliferation of arms in Central Africa

7. At its thirty-third ministerial meeting, the Committee developed and adopted a declaration on a road map for counter-terrorism and non-proliferation of arms in Central Africa, in which it recognized the existing threat of terrorism in the subregion and identified ways to mitigate the risks through increased cooperation

among its member States in the security, economic and social sectors. It delineated specific implementation objectives at the national, regional and international levels.

8. To advance the vision set forth in the road map, UNOCA, in its capacity as the secretariat of the Committee, is mobilizing expertise and resources from relevant United Nations entities and other international partners, including the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate and the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre. Options for transforming the road map into an integrated strategy will be submitted to the Committee at its thirty-fifth ministerial meeting.

B. Implementation of the Sao Tome Initiative (Kinshasa Convention and Code of Conduct for the Defence and Security Forces in Central Africa)

9. During the period under review, the Committee pursued the two-pronged agenda set out in the Sao Tome Initiative, adopted in 2007. Discussions focused on the status of implementation of the Central African Convention for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons, Their Ammunition and All Parts and Components That Can Be Used for Their Manufacture, Repair and Assembly, known as the Kinshasa Convention, and the Code of Conduct for the Defence and Security Forces in Central Africa.

10. In that regard, the explosions at an ammunition depot in Brazzaville on 4 March 2012 were a stark reminder of the need to strengthen stockpile management procedures for small arms and light weapons in Central Africa. They also underscored the relevance of the Kinshasa Convention as a framework for the adoption of appropriate measures at the national level.

11. The Kinshasa Convention has been signed by all States members of the Committee. To enter into force, it requires the deposit of six instruments of ratification, acceptance, approval or accession. At the thirty-fourth ministerial meeting, the States members of the Committee agreed to ratify the Convention ahead of the Committee's twentieth anniversary celebration, planned for December 2012 in Brazzaville. As at 30 June 2012, the Central African Republic had finalized the ratification procedure and was taking steps towards depositing its instrument of ratification with the Secretary-General. In addition, some States members of the Committee had begun implementing measures called for in the Convention, including the creation of national commissions on small arms and light weapons.

12. The thirty-third ministerial meeting of the Committee afforded an opportunity to assess the implementation of the Code of Conduct for the Defence and Security Forces in Central Africa and to identify continuing initiatives. In that context, the representative of the secretariat of ECCAS presented the Community's activities, including the organization of awareness-raising workshops and seminars; the development of specific training tools; support to build capacity at the national level; and the compilation of best practices. It was noted that there had been some delays in the implementation of the activities, however, partly stemming from the lack of financial contributions by member States and the unavailability of national counterparts in some countries.

C. Review of the geopolitical and security situation in Central Africa

13. In accordance with its usual practice, the Committee provided a platform for its member States to engage in dialogue on the peace and security challenges facing the subregion.

14. The Committee noted improvements in the areas of democratic processes and institutional strengthening, highlighting the successful holding of a number of elections in the subregion. It also, however, observed the persistence of worrisome threats to peace and security in parts of Central Africa, including armed robberies, piracy in the Gulf of Guinea and pockets of insecurity in the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

15. To facilitate more in-depth discussions on possible mitigating measures that could be taken by its member States, the Committee requested an analytical document on threats to peace and security with specific recommendations from the secretariat of ECCAS ahead of its thirty-fifth ministerial meeting.

D. Maritime security and piracy in the Gulf of Guinea

16. The Committee discussed the issue of piracy and maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea, which had been featuring prominently on its agenda since 2008. It highlighted actions taken to secure the vital interests at sea of Gulf of Guinea States that were members of ECCAS, including the holding of joint technical meetings between ECCAS, the Economic Community of West African States, the Gulf of Guinea Commission and other relevant actors.

17. The Committee reviewed progress made towards the operationalization of the Regional Centre for Maritime Security in Central Africa, which was established pursuant to the Protocol on the strategy to secure the vital interests of the member States of ECCAS in the Gulf of Guinea, signed on 24 October 2009 in Kinshasa. Issues arising from the establishment of the Centre were discussed, in particular financial difficulties relating to arrears in contributions by States members of ECCAS. It was noted that a meeting of the ECCAS ministers responsible for maritime transport of the States signatories to the Protocol was expected to be held before September 2012, at which emphasis would be laid on the need to make budgetary provision for the Centre at the national level and to ensure financial contributions in 2013. The Committee expressed appreciation for the political will displayed by Cameroon, the Congo (host country of the Centre) and Equatorial Guinea in promoting the establishment of the Centre through the multinational coordination centre for zone D of the Gulf of Guinea (covering the maritime space of Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon and Sao Tome and Principe).

18. The Committee took note of the discussions by the Security Council on piracy and armed robbery at sea in the Gulf of Guinea on 19 October 2011 and 27 February 2012. It welcomed the coordination role played by UNOCA, in close collaboration with the United Nations Office for West Africa, in the implementation of Council resolution 2039 (2012).

19. The Committee also discussed the organization of a joint summit of Gulf of Guinea States to develop a regional anti-piracy strategy, as requested by the Security Council in that resolution. Cameroon proposed to host the summit, in accordance

with its past requests to organize regional discussions on maritime security. Concern was expressed about the lack of financing for the organization of the summit, given the importance of high-level participation.

E. Impact of climate change on peace and security in Central Africa

20. At its thirty-third ministerial meeting, the Committee discussed the impact of climate change on peace and security in Central Africa. The representative of the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa, on behalf of the Office for Disarmament Affairs, presented an information note on the impact on security of migration, the degradation of water sources, the decrease in agricultural output and the increase in the regularity of natural disasters. In the note, the Centre provided an overview of existing subregional strategies and intergovernmental initiatives to combat the effects of climate change in Central Africa and called for stronger engagement by States on the issue.

F. Link between women, peace and security, and the implementation by Central African States of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and other relevant resolutions

21. The Committee discussed Security Council resolutions 1325 (2000), 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009) and 1889 (2009), in addition to General Assembly resolution 65/69. The representatives of Burundi and the Central African Republic described the actions taken to promote and protect the rights of women in their countries. The Committee underlined the need to develop national action plans and sought the assistance of UNOCA in that regard. UNOCA and the Subregional Office for Central Africa of UN-Women agreed to work closely together and initiate cooperation with member States to prepare such plans.

G. Efforts to combat armed groups in Central Africa, notably the Lord's Resistance Army

22. At its thirty-fourth ministerial meeting, the Committee discussed the threat posed by the presence of armed groups in the subregion. The representative of UNOCA gave a briefing on the activities of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) and their impact on populations in the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, as well as on the development of a regional strategy to address the LRA threat, as requested by the Security Council in its presidential statement of 14 November 2011 (S/PRST/2011/21). It was noted that the regional strategy, developed in consultation with the United Nations presences in the region and the African Union, comprised five strategic goals: to make fully operational and implement the African Union-led Regional Cooperation Initiative against LRA; to enhance efforts to promote the protection of civilians; to expand current disarmament, demobilization, repatriation, resettlement and reintegration activities to cover all LRA-affected areas; to promote a coordinated humanitarian and child protection response in all LRA-affected areas; and to provide peacebuilding, human rights, rule of law and long-term development support to LRA-affected Governments to enable them to establish authority across their territory. It was

recalled that, in its presidential statement of 29 June 2012 (S/PRST/2012/18), the Security Council had endorsed the regional strategy and urged UNOCA to support its implementation. Furthermore, the Committee was briefed on various missions that were jointly conducted by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of UNOCA, Abou Moussa, and the African Union Special Envoy for the LRA issue, Francisco Madeira.

23. The Committee saluted the efforts of UNOCA in coordinating the development of the LRA strategy. It also expressed its satisfaction at the capture of Caesar Achellam, an LRA commander. Furthermore, it welcomed the establishment of a joint intelligence fusion centre in Goma, Democratic Republic of the Congo, to share information on the negative forces in the subregion and combat the illegal exploitation of natural resources.

H. Update on activities by the Office for Disarmament Affairs

24. The Committee received a briefing by the representative of the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa, on behalf of the Office for Disarmament Affairs, on the latest developments relating to conventional weapons, in particular small arms, light weapons and weapons of mass destruction, and other disarmament and arms control issues. Member States were strongly encouraged to participate in international forums on disarmament affairs to ensure a common Central African position in that area. In addition, they were encouraged to fulfil their reporting obligations, in particular those pertaining to Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) and other binding legal instruments.

25. The Committee members also exchanged information on the process within the United Nations for the adoption of an arms trade treaty and on the second United Nations Conference to Review Progress Made in the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. Member States expressed concern over the safety of ammunition stockpiles, taking into account risks of stockpile mismanagement or of diversion to non-State actors. The representative of the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa provided information on the elaboration of the international ammunition technical guidelines and the "Safe*r*Guard" programme aimed at securing ammunition and protecting lives.

I. Illegal exploitation of natural resources

26. Following concerns expressed by member States at the thirty-second ministerial meeting, the representative of the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa, on behalf of the Office for Disarmament Affairs, presented an information note on the impact of illegal exploitation of natural resources on security in Central Africa, in which the Centre addressed the role of natural resources in violent conflicts and explored the effects that various types of resources and their geographic location could have on the nature of conflict in terms of duration, violence and political goals of the belligerents. It provided an overview of international, subregional and bilateral initiatives to combat illegal exploitation, noting that, although some of those efforts had proved successful, the issue would need to continue to be tackled.

J. Promotion of awareness of International Widows' Day

27. At its thirty-second meeting, the Committee had decided that upcoming ministerial meetings should include on their agenda the consideration of General Assembly resolution 65/189, adopted on the initiative of Gabon on 2 December 2010 and entitled "International Widows' Day", on the need to protect widows and their children. The representative of Gabon stressed the importance of resolution 65/189, informing the Committee of efforts by Gabon towards its effective implementation, including through the revision of existing legislation. The Committee stressed the need to fully implement the resolution and called upon international partners to provide support in that regard.

K. Cooperation with international and regional organizations, including the United Nations

28. During the period under review, the Committee established partnerships with various subregional, regional and international organizations in key areas. For example, the thirty-fourth ministerial meeting of the Committee was the first to feature the participation, their subregional offices for Central Africa, of UN-Women and the Economic Commission for Africa. UNOCA and the subregional offices of UN-Women and the Economic Commission for Africa agreed to reinforce their cooperation in support of the Committee's efforts towards the promotion of peace, security and stability in Central Africa. Meanwhile, the Committee encouraged UNOCA and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region to strengthen their cooperation in the area of cross-border security.

29. The Subregional Office for Central Africa of UN-Women also offered its support to member States to help to build the capacity of women in the subregion. Similarly, the Subregional Office for Central Africa of the Economic Commission for Africa proposed to strengthen the capacity of member States towards peace, security and development.

L. Preparations for the celebration of the twentieth anniversary of the Committee

30. The Committee agreed to celebrate its twentieth anniversary at its thirty-fifth ministerial meeting, to be held in Brazzaville from 3 to 7 December 2012. A preparatory commission, comprising members of the bureau and representatives of UNOCA and the host country, was formed. The secretariat of the Committee would oversee preparations for the celebration.

III. Administrative and financial matters

31. Following the decision of the Secretary-General to transfer the secretariat of the Committee to the Department of Political Affairs, UNOCA assumed this role in May 2011, within existing resources. These additional responsibilities were not taken into account when setting staffing levels for UNOCA, however, and the Trust Fund received limited extrabudgetary contributions during the period under review.

32. As at 31 December 2011, the moneys held in the Trust Fund stood at $51,903. No additional contributions have been received since those of Angola ($10,000), the Congo ($10,961) and Sao Tome and Principe ($25,273), which were made during the period from 1 January to 30 June 2011.

33. The Committee reviewed the financial status of the Trust Fund and commended those member States that had made financial contributions. It encouraged member States to fulfil their financial commitments under the Declaration on the Trust Fund of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa (Libreville Declaration), as non-payment of contributions could negatively affect the functioning of the Committee. It called upon the international community to make financial contributions to the Trust Fund.

IV. Conclusions and observations

34. The Secretary-General welcomes the adoption of recommendations and other measures to strengthen peace and security in Central Africa, in particular the signing of the Kinshasa Convention by all member States. He urges member States to ratify the Convention in a timely manner for it to enter into force in time for the celebration of the Committee's twentieth anniversary.

35. The subregion continues to face challenges that negatively affect its security. To counter both traditional and emerging threats, the Committee adopted a declaration on a road map for counter-terrorism and non-proliferation of arms in Central Africa. The United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa and the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate will support the Committee in the implementation of the road map. The Secretary-General encourages the Committee to complete its assessment of the impact of initiatives against armed groups in Central Africa.

36. The Secretary-General welcomes the efforts of United Nations entities, including UN-Women, the Economic Commission for Africa, the Subregional Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Central Africa and UNOCA, to establish a collaborative framework to tackle peace and security challenges in Central Africa.

37. On the eve of the celebration of its twentieth anniversary, the Committee remains an important forum for discussion and decision-making among States in Central Africa. The Secretary-General encourages the Committee to pursue its initiatives towards the strengthening of its collaboration with various entities of the United Nations, the African Union and other partners in pursuit of peace and security in Central Africa.

38. The Secretary-General wishes to thank Angola, the Congo and Sao Tome and Principe for their financial contribution to the Committee's Trust Fund, in keeping with the Libreville Declaration. He calls upon all those in a position to do so, in particular the States members of the Committee, to support the work of this important confidence-building mechanism for Central African States through voluntary contributions.

39. The Secretary-General looks forward to the thirty-fifth ministerial meeting and the celebration of the Committee's twentieth anniversary, to be held in Brazzaville in December 2012, and hopes that these events will afford an opportunity to learn from the Committee's past successes and lay the foundation for its future work. The

Secretary-General is grateful for the support provided to the work of the Committee by UNOCA, the Office of Disarmament Affairs and the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa.

Annex

Financial situation of the Trust Fund for the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa for 2011

	(United States dollars)
Opening balance (31 December 2010)	29 305
Income received (1 January-31 December 2011)	
Voluntary contributions	46 234
Funds received under inter-organizational arrangements	0
Interest income	722
Miscellaneous and other income	0
Subtotal	**76 261**
Expenditure (1 January-31 December 2011)	21 556
Programme support costs	2 802
Subtotal	**24 358**
Prior-period adjustments	0
Reserves and closing balance (31 December 2011)	**51 903**

Note: During the period from 1 January to 30 June 2011, contributions totalling $46,234 were received from Angola ($10,000), the Congo ($10,961) and Sao Tome and Principe ($25,273).